

Commissioner Susan Whitaker
Tennessee Department of Tourist Development

Susan Whitaker, a veteran tourism marketing industry executive, was named Commissioner of Tourist Development in January 2003, by Governor Phil Bredesen and was reappointed by the Governor in January of 2007 for a second term.

In this role, Whitaker is responsible for marketing Tennessee's tourism industry domestically and internationally. Tourism is one of Tennessee's largest industries employing more than 181,300 Tennesseans and providing a \$13.4 billion direct economic impact.

Whitaker oversees the development and implementation of statewide tourism's comprehensive marketing, publicity and promotions campaigns, all designed to stimulate growth of tourism in Tennessee. Of note is the state's world-class web site, tnvacation.com as well as the state's 13 highly rated welcome centers.

As Tennessee's Tourism Commissioner, Whitaker serves on the Executive Committee of the National Council of State Tourism Directors as well as on the Board of Directors of Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) and the University of Tennessee's Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Management Advisory Board. Whitaker is a member of the Governor's Jobs Cabinet and the Smoky Mountains Park Commission. In June of 2007, Whitaker was voted Chairman of the Board for Travel South USA.

Whitaker is a Chicago native and a direct descendent of Tennessee's first Governor, John Sevier. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications from Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Prior to her state cabinet post, Whitaker served as vice president of marketing for Dollywood, Tennessee's most visited tourist attraction. Before joining Dollywood, Whitaker worked from 1993 to 1997 as director of marketing and advertising for the Silver Dollar City/Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation properties in Branson, Missouri. In 2000, Whitaker was appointed to serve on the Corporation's President's Team, developing strategic plans for all nine properties of the corporation, including Dollywood.

Throughout her career, Whitaker has received many awards and honors. She has earned the Telly and Addy Awards for her broadcast and advertising work. She was presented the Pacesetter Award from the Stennis Center for Public Service and was invited to serve as one of two Tennessee Representatives on the organization's Council of Pacesetters.